Plays on Many Stages

Avery Hopwood's Problemism Is Only a Piece of Pretense

Playwright Makes 'Social' Theme Vehicle for His Usual Style in 'Why Men Leave Home'—Discussion of Other Broadway Productions.

By LAURENCE REAMER.

BE not deceived by the rumor that Avery Hopwood has turned serious and is, in "Why Men Leave Home," the playwright with a thesis. The cloak of the younger Dumas of the social series of French dramas has not dropped on his shoulders. Mr. Hopwood would probably throw it off the minute he discovered any such calamity. In his new play at the Morosco Theater the impenitent dramatist is only pretending. He sets out with the obvious purpose of castigating the selfish American wife. She should not leave her husband alone while she gads over Europe, spending his money. She should think of her home, she should delight in having a family and doing all the dear and domestic things that her mother did before her, just as if frivolous women had not existed in every generation.

Thus having put his silly wives, and their not altogether inconsolable husbands in juxtaposition, the stage is set for the introduction of all the Hopwood stock in trade at its best. Maybe there is less harm in putting married couples in twin beds than some of his previous plays have contained. But there were other situations, perhaps less crudely but just as whole-heartedly, brought into use again. Do undressing ladies still thrill? It was years ago that Charmian and "Orange Blossoms" made their stir. The Hattons have pursued the double meaning with an industry that even Mr. Hopwood could not equal. And there are two of them.

But the author of "Why Men Leave Home" appears to see it first. No guilty double entente escapes him. Mr. Hopwood is always able to sprinkle salt on its tail, get firm hold of it and imbed it into his dialogue. So there is the usual number of them in the text of the new play. But why the monkey glands? Surely they are beneath the dignity of such a past master of the squinting phrase as the author of "Why Men Leave Home." Wagenhals and Kemper appear to think that they did their artistic duty by the author when they advertised his play as a comedy. So with a clear conscience Mr. Kemper went straight away to having it acted sometimes as farce and even at intervals altogether in the spirit of musical comedy. It is only just to say for the playwright that, having accepted his task, he does it well.

Why Women Cling to Husbands.

One of the brightest bits of observation in James Forbes's play, "The Endless Chain," in which Margaret Lawrence has so distinguished herself at the Cohan Theater, is to be found in the refusal of *Nellie Webb* to return to the first husband, who still wants her back in spite of her marriage to another. She admits a fond memory for the first one, but she can't leave *Val*. Since *Val* seems by way of being rather a rotter, and by no means indifferent to the charms of younger women, her loyalty is not easy to understand. But she explains. He amuses her so. He is so witty and makes her laugh; so she will stick to him in spite of the love of a worthier man.

Women have been known to cling to husbands altogether unworthy of them for just this reason. They are so funny. They do keep them laughing. They may make them weep occasionally as well. But women love to forgive with a laugh. So *Nellie Webb*, hardened as she is to the struggle for life in New York's gaudy hotel set, would rather be amused by her unfaithful husband than accept the dull devotion of a faithful lover.

It is to this character acted by Miss Olive May that Mr. Forbes intrusts most of his social philosophy. As the program announces that the author staged the play, he is doubtless responsible for the manner in which she delivers his message. He must also have arranged the conversations which open the play with the characters loudly proclaiming their witticisms. This was the manner of acting the Wilde plays when they were new, and it was of course an irreparable injustice to the author's skill. The third act of "Lady Windemere's Fan" used to be acted like the first part of a minstrel show. The players stood about and delivered the witticisms of Wilde with the same naturalness and spontaneity that Mr. Bones used to ask the end men how his corporosity sagassiated.

For years that method of acting Wilde persisted in the minds of the more or less ridiculous "producers," who were no more certain to be competent and intelligent then they are now. It is for that reason that the Wilde plays when they occasionally come to a hearing nowadays seem rather less artificial than they used to. The Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Shean way of acting them is a thing of the past.

Change of the Old Order.

George Broadhurst has devoted some labor to making a play out of "The Gambling Chaplain," by George Beaumont, which furnished him with the inspiration for "Wild Oats Lane." Mr. Broadhurst evidently went to work with the idea of taking his chances with some successful expedients of the older dramatic methods of writing. So we have such carefully built up scenes as that which closes the third act. There can be no doubt that they would have had their effect at one time. If the audience seemed apathetic under them on the first night of the play, it may have been because the more or less sophisticated public that gathers on those occasions cannot be moved by anything reactionary. In order to make any impression on these experienced judges, it is necessary to introduce the note of decided novelty into the performance. Audiences have been known to show no more interest in a new play than the listeners did the other night in "Wild Oats Lane," although the piece enjoyed subsequent popularity. On the other hand, novelty which has aroused the first nighters to enthusiastic approval has left subsequent spectators cold.

It will therefore be interesting to observe the event of Mr. Broadhurst's experiment. Perhaps the most dangerous element in building up scenes in the way that audiences at one time found so stirring is the difficulty that the actors must struggle under. They are likely to appear old fashioned whether they want to or not. Maclyn Arbuckle did not escape this criticism for his performance of the Irish priest. His brogue, to be sure, occasionally skidded, but there are few brogues which have shown themselves to be proof against this accident in a long play.

It is difficult to see how Mr. Arbuckle could have acted the old priest in any other way. It is not easy for the actor to appear in modern method priest with material designed according to such an old pattern. It is especially trying when he has the burden of the play on his shoulders. Subordinates may be as realistic and flat in tone as they want to and the value of a drama is not affected by such unimportant elements. But when the eyes of the audience are on the protagonist who is expected to interpret to them every phase of the author's meaning he cannot afford to ignore those devices of his art which enable him to be definite. Whether an audience enjoys the old school of acting or the new, one wants a distinct understanding of what the play and the characters are about. It is in the effort to give that clear idea that most of the players incur the charge of being old fashioned. It would have been difficult indeed for Mr. Arbuckle, with his heavy responsibility, to escape it, just as it was for Miss Tempest in "A Serpent's Tooth."

Novelty in Mr. Dowling's Play.

Perhaps the formulas of the musical play are not, after all, so hidebound as they were said here to be. There is undeniably novelty in "Sally, Irene and Mary," which is making the Casino just now a contrast to most of the half filled theaters in town. It may be that Eddie Dowling, who makes most of the fun in the play, in addition to having created it, has merely supplied three Cinderellas instead of one. He has contrived, nevertheless, to create some humor in their ascent to the Winter Garden from the court of the East Side tenement. It is more or less of a surprise to discover that there are still any Irish on the East Side. There has for a long time been a rumor to the effect that succeeding waves of immigrants had pushed them well to the northward.

Mr. Dowling has put them there, nevertheless, and he has brogue enough, blarney enough and humor enough for a much larger collection of them. There is some of the strongly humorous tang of the old Harrigan pieces about the opening scenes. Mr. Dowling as the young plumber with $1,800 in the bank, a flivver of his own and the native pluck of the district, is any man's match even when he drives up to the stage entrance of the Winter Garden. Very fresh and amusing, here is his own humor. It is in this respect that "Sally, Irene and Mary" seems most novel. It escapes the hackneyed episodes of so-called musical comedy with a persistence that keeps the audience interested in the doings of the extremely youthful cohorts intrusted with its performance. There are, of course, three mothers of the girls and even the mother of a young man-about-town. But youth predominates importantly. Mr. Dowling seems just out of boyhood, while Jean Brown does some extremely graceful dancing and Edna Morn sings and acts in a way to keep *Mary*, perhaps, the most popular of the three. Kitty Flynn as *Irene*, however, is a pouting youngster, who is not overlooked. Mr. Dowling's fresh fun and the general atmosphere of youth make the new piece at the Casino rather novel in its charm.

What is there in the average musical play to keep the listener as much interested during the second part of the evening as he has been while enjoying the novelty of seeing the actors under new conditions in the first half of the play listening to the more or less new witticisms and hearing the music? It is not easy to make this second part as much of a pleasaure to the audience. The problem puzzles the managers probably more than any other. They are careful to scatter their good things throughout the evening in the way that shall be most effective.

Keeping the Audience Diverted.

For various reasons it is not easy to keep the audience just as much diverted. The actors, in the first place, have done about all they know how to. If they are men probably they will not be any funnier later than they already have been. It is doubtful if the girls are going to look any prettier, although it sometimes happens that greater opportunities for observation come with the second act. When a first act continues, for instance, for an hour and a half it is fairly safe to say that the capacity of the players has been revealed.

It is on the creators of the piece that the enjoyment of the second act depends. If the librettist and his assistants have devised funny incidents or the comedians have thought out amusing comments, such as Will Rogers is able to do, the second act may remain up to the standard in its power to entertain.

First Night Calendar.

MONDAY.

HENRY MILLER'S THEATER—Miss Ona Claire in "The Awful Truth," a comedy by Arthur Richman, will be presented by Gilbert Miller for Charles Frohman, Inc. Bruce McRae will have the leading male role.

TUESDAY.

SAM H. HARRIS THEATER—"It's a Boy," a comedy by William Anthony McGuire, produced by Sam H. Harris. The cast includes Robert Ames, Miss Dorothy Mackaye, John Daly Murphy, Charles Lawrence and Jean Adair.

FULTON THEATER—"Orange Blossoms," a comedy with music founded on "La Passerelle," by Fred de Gresac and Francis de Croisset, modernized by Mme. de Gresac, will be the initial production of Edward Royce. Victor Herbert wrote the music and B. G. De Sylva the lyrics. Paul Poiret designed the costumes and Norman-Bel Geddes the settings. Miss Edith Day heads the cast. Others are Hal Skelly, Robert Michaelis, Pat Somerset, Queenie Smith and Nancy Welford.

WEDNESDAY.

WINTER GARDEN—"The Passing Show of 1922," starring Willie and Eugene Howard, will be presented by Lee and J. J. Shubert. Others in the company are George Hassell, Mlle. Alcorn, the Lockfords, the Macweys, Sam Ash, Francis Renault, Fred Allen and Nat Nazarro, Jr. The book and lyrics are by Harold Atteridge, with additional lyrics by Jack Stanley and music by Alfred Goodman. The production was staged by J. C. Huffman, under the direction of J. J. Shubert, and Allan K. Foster staged the dances and ballets.

RITZ THEATER—"Banco," a comedy adapted by Clare Kummer from the French of Alfred Savoir, will be presented by William Harris, Jr., with Miss Lola Fisher and Alfred Lunt featured. Others will be Francis Bryne, Robert Strange and Edward G. Robinson.

THURSDAY.

ELTINGE THEATER—Miss Florence Reed in "East of Suez," a melodrama by W. Somerset Maugham, will be presented by A. H. Woods. Others in the company are John Halliday, Geoffrey Kern, Howard Lang and Gypsy O'Brien.

FRIDAY.

TIMES SQUARE THEATER—"The Exciters," a comedy by Martin Brown, will be presented by the Selwyns with Allan Dinehart and Miss Tallulah Bankhead in the leading roles. Others will be Enid Markey, Marsh Allen, Chester Morris and Miss Thais Lawton.

Stars and Leading Players in Some of Broadway's Latest Productions

Did You Hear - - - - - ?

Who Helen Gahagan Is and How She Studied, How Eleanor Painter Is and Miss Mills's Idea of a Good Looking Man?

HELEN GAHAGAN, who made the first performance of "Dreams for Sale" memorable, is destined to play a large role in New York theatricals in the future. The audience at the Playhouse on Wednesday welcomed her with all the enthusiasm her part allowed—welcomed her, indeed, as few young actresses have been received recently in New York.

It seems inconceivable that *Anne Baldwin* should be Miss Gahagan's second professional appearance. She was *Sybil Harrington* in "Manhattan" when that play was acted at the same theater, and then made her professional debut. Previously she had appeared in H. W. Gribble's comedy, "Shoot," which was played in private last June. Mr. Gribble met Miss Gahagan when she played in April a sketch of her own at the little Lenox Theater. That night she was gratifying a lifelong ambition by acting, she having always intended to make a career on the stage. At the time she was rehearsing this play she was passing her final examinations at Barnard College.

Miss Gahagan is entirely self taught. She prepared herself to be an actress without other assistance than that she could get at school. She was born in Brooklin and lived there all her life. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter H. Gahason of 231 Lincoln Place. Her

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